

Dear Chairman
Martin:

This is nuts. At
some point, this
media conglomeration
has got to stop!
Media is not simply
a business that can
take advantage of
every economy of
scale. Rather, it is
also the lifeblood
of democracy. I'm
getting pretty sick
and tired of the FCC
rubber-stamping
every move to
accrete that the
industry comes up
with. Profit is not
the be-all and
end-all of media.

Furthermore, the
behavior of these
companies -- AT&T
and BellSouth -- has
been reprehensible
and anti-democratic.
Not only are they
pro-COPE (another
horrible idea that's
clearly more
pay-to-play b.s.
which will result in
less democracy), but
they sold their
customers' records

to the NSA, as you know. Yes, I know they have been given legal cover (I doubt it will stand up), but these are not the companies to reward, regardless of the other arguments above.

Lastly, you know, we citizens are not so easily manipulated by the PR firms. COPE has zero to do with "free markets." Nor did the phone companies' involvement in the NSA horror have much to do with "terrorism." Profit, that great motivator (and obviously not always a bad thing), is the key.

OK, boilerplate from freepress -- a great organization -- follows. I endorse said boilerplate wholeheartedly.

I am writing to challenge the Comcast/Time Warner/Adelphia

merger (FCC Docket No. 05-192) and the AT&T/BellSouth merger (FCC Docket No. 06-74). Allowing the largest telecommunications company and the two largest cable companies and in the United States to grow even larger does not serve the public interest.

The concentration of media power is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are increasingly falling under the control of a handful of giant corporations. The cost of broadband service also remains out of reach for many households. Americans are hungry for more competition in services. However, these mergers will only starve Americans of this needed competition.

Allowing AT&T to combine with BellSouth will give the top three broadband providers control of over half of all broadband connections in the country. At the same time, the Time Warner/Comcast/Adelphia merger will give Comcast and Time Warner increased power over entire regions of the United States, allowing rates to rise even as the digital divide continues to grow.

The FCC should block these transactions or impose strict conditions to protect free speech and competition under its "public interest standard." If the FCC decides to allow either of these mergers, it should require the following conditions:

1. Subscribers must

be able to choose from competitive Internet Service Providers ("open access"). The FCC should also ensure that these companies cannot discriminate against any Internet content or rival service and that every service will be treated exactly the same ("Network Neutrality").

2. Companies must be required to sell broadband access separate from video and telephone service, and at the same price ("naked broadband" or "unbundling").

3. Any subscriber must be able to connect any device to the network (such as a Wi-Fi router) that does not harm the network.

4. Take steps to protect public access programming ("PEG"). Cable companies have

become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments. Likewise, telecommunications giants — like AT&T — are trying to eliminate the remaining vestiges of effective local oversight and control altogether.

5. Independent programmers must be able to reach subscribers. We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because providers of video service bundle them together.

6. Any company that owns both programming and video systems should

be required to
provide competitors
with access to their
regional sports and
other programming
needed to offer
competing services,
so consumers will
still have real
choices.

In conclusion, I ask
the FCC to consider
the interests of the
people like me who
pay the cable,
telephone and
broadband bills and
watch the
programming. Many of
us already have
enough trouble
trying to afford
broadband or cable
TV. Please don't
make it even harder
for us to find
competitors, or make
it easier for
Comcast, Time Warner
and AT&T to raise
prices or block
local and
independent voices.

If anyone is
actually reading
this -- c'mon. Don't
think millions of

Americans all across
the political
spectrum can't see
what's going on --
from the 1996
telecom act through
today, mostly
blessed by both
parties.

The FCC is supposed
to be OUR voice, not
the corporations'.
Please do your job
(ie, allow the 2
Democrats on the
board to do their
jobs). I only wish
Republicans were
true conservatives
-- anti-monopoly,
anti-surveillance,
pro-privacy,
pro-competition.

Get it together,
folks, and do the
right thing.

Thank you.